

## **MAVA Response to the 2004 Volunteer Management Capacity Study**

August 10, 2004

Katie Campbell, CVA

Dear Katie:

On behalf of the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA), congratulations on the outstanding work you are doing in regard to coordinating "From Research to Action: A Unified National Response to the 2004 Volunteer Management Capacity Study." It was wonderful to be a part of one of your recent focus groups. MAVA also applauds the study sponsors: The UPS Foundation, Corporation for National and Community Service, and USA Freedom Corps for commissioning the Urban Institute study. In recent months, MAVA has been developing and stepping up efforts to advocate for many of the ideas expressed in the report with an eye toward capacity building for volunteer programs.

Following you will find additional comments on behalf of MAVA in regard to the study and in response to your request for review and reaction:

- The profession of volunteer resources management must be more broadly recognized as a legitimate and essential function.
- A very critical issue is the lack of funding to support the infrastructure for volunteer administration and volunteer resources managers. Many organizations do not have the funds to hire a volunteer resources manager or even provide the match funds for national service participants, let alone defray the expenses of their volunteers. Beyond this, very limited resources are available to support local connector organizations and volunteer resource centers.
- A new mindset is called for about the importance of investing in volunteer administration, volunteer resource managers and related resource organizations. We are heartened to learn that new funds are about to be made available nationally for the purpose of building volunteer management capacity. However, unless there is substantial funding that is disseminated nationwide and reaches a wide spectrum of organizations, including local level, direct service organizations and grass roots organizations, it will be difficult to achieve the change called for in this report.
- With regard to connector organizations, in addition to strengthening existing volunteer resource centers, funds are needed to assure distribution of connector organizations statewide. Connector organizations are necessary in both rural and urban areas and must reach communities of all sizes. These connector organizations need the training, experience and expertise required for success. Experienced volunteer resources managers and experts in volunteer resource management must be involved in the training and support of these organizations. Professional associations play an instrumental role in preparing, training and motivating volunteer resources managers. They help to build and promote the body of knowledge about best practices, and bring together leaders in the field to advance the profession. They too are in need of resources to fulfill their mission.
- Volunteer resources managers often have other responsibilities and assignments tagged onto their jobs. And, people in other positions, often have volunteer resources management responsibilities tagged onto their jobs. The role and responsibility of the volunteer resources manager parallels other significant positions within nonprofit organizations, yet volunteer resources managers often are paid substantially less. If best practices are to be implemented and

maintained, more dedicated time for this purpose and a salary that matches the level of responsibility of the position are essential.

- With regard to national service participants assisting volunteer resource managers, a realistic view of what is possible is needed. Consideration must be given to the quick turnover of people who are placed in these roles and the initial training that is required for effectiveness. It is critical to assure that anyone who is assisting others in establishing systems within volunteer organizations is thoroughly trained and has the experience and expertise for success. The credibility of the value of volunteers within organizations, effective operation of volunteer programs, and impact and retention of volunteers is at stake. Given that volunteer programs are currently under resourced, funds are needed for the purpose of building up volunteer program efforts with professional on-going staff members.
- In the event that there is a national service placement, the volunteer resources manager must have discretion as to the role and responsibilities of the national service participant, while working with the participant in a mutual way to assure a meaningful placement. Where national service participants are placed, they must supplement and not supplant the paid volunteer resources manager.
- Benchmarks, outcome data, and research are sorely needed. Funding is necessary to accomplish this, as well as to assist organizations to measure the impact of their own volunteer programs.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this timely study. MAVA greatly values the information acquired through this study process. Please let us know how we can be of further assistance.

Best wishes on your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Paula J. Beugen, Public Affairs Chair  
Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration